

Brief history of Shannon Development from “Ireland’s Shannon Story” a book written by an employee of that company, Brian Callanan:

On page 45 the author recalls a comment made by a member of the original Shannon Development management team, Jack Lynch, who later became Ireland’s Prime Minister, who called Shannon Development’s first Chairman, Brendan O’Regan, “a one-man state company”.

Callanan describes how O’Regan was given license to use public assets for private profit by reason of his close personal relationship with Sean Lemass, the Minister of Trade and Commerce at the time. Mr. O’Regan managed to obtain a very favorable service contract for his private company called Sales and Catering Ltd, wholly owned by Mr. O’Regan, from the Irish Government for the provision of virtually all services at Shannon Airport, wholly owned by the Irish Government.

Mr. O’Regan’s company Sales and Marketing Ltd. started to call itself Shannon Development and even Shannon “Authority” on the grounds that most of the ideas for developing Shannon Airport were coming from Mr. O’Regan.

When O’Regan managed to convince Lemass that not only was O’Regan’s sweetheart service contract good for Shannon but that his private company Sales and Catering Ltd. should have grant-giving authority as well, Lemass balked.

Instead Lemass agreed to form a new company called Shannon Free Airport Development Company Limited, (SFADCo) with O’Regan at its head. This company was indeed given unlimited grant-giving authority on behalf of the Irish Government. It has called itself Shannon Development ever since though it has never bothered to register the name.

SFADCo was incorporated in 1959 as a private Limited Company having the Irish Government as its sole shareholder. To his credit Mr. Lemass saw this as a temporary arrangement but SFADCo has jealously guarded and vastly expanded this grant-giving privilege ever since.

Upon incorporating, it gave itself almost limitless powers in its Articles of Association and Byelaws with only one responsibility that of filing a brief private company annual report with the Companies Registration Office as an ordinary private company.

In Ireland if a private company, as defined under the various Irish Companies Acts, has only one shareholder it is not even required to hold an AGM!

It appalled many Irish parliamentarians at the time, particularly opposition leader James Dillon. SFADCo stands alone in Ireland largely unchallenged as a government entity to this day. It is known for having a large checkbook (taxpayer’s money) while enjoying a unique lack of accountability.